(i) training to artisans for imparting skills, (ii) design and technical development, (iii) marketing development support for activities like exhibitions craft fairs, handicraft expos etc. (iv) assistance for setting of craft development centres and (v) grant of national awares to talented artisans etc. Apart from this, assistance is being provided for setting up of Regional Handicrafts Museum to preserve traditional art of the country and for revival of dying crafts through a series of measures like identification of problems, training, design, development, publicity, marketing etc.

[English]

Representation of Jobless Employees in Hoarding Business

928. SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that 35 thousand employees in hoarding business have been rendered jobless;

(b) whether these employees have submitted any representation to the Government; and

(c) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (c) It has been reported that several representations were made by the Delhi Painters' Association to the concerned civic authorities protesting against the stringencies of the new advertisement bye-laws. One of the points made by the above mentioned Association is that new advertisement bye-laws, by reducing the number of hoardings, will render about 35,000 people engaged in this business jobless. The Government has no information of the basis for arriving at this estimate. The number of advertisement sites have been reduced primarily in order to improve the aesthetics of the city, facilitate the traffic movement and promote greater safety for the citizens. A conscious decision was taken by the Government of Delhi in consultation with the Delhi Urban Arts Commission to restrict the number of advertisement sites in view of the aforesaid consideration.

Indian Tourism hit by Poor Air Services

929. SHRI SUBRAHMANYAM NELAVALA :

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned, "India tourism hit by poor air service-says study" appearing in the Indian Express, New Delhi dated October 22, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether India has great potential as a tourist destination but it has not been tapped effectively mainly due to poor air services;

(d) if so, the steps taken/to be taken in this regard;

(e) whether Air India and Indian Airlines utilise only 41.6% of their entitlements while foreign countries operators utilise more than 66%; and

(f) if so, the reaction of the Government in the regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Improvement of air transport services is a continuous process which involves huge investments for fleet acquisition, construction of airports and other infrastructure facilities. Opening of the domestic sector to private airlines has injected competition in aviation industry which in-turn has improved the frequency and quality of air services. Indian Airlines has increased its capacity deployment by 15% and taken steps to improve the quality of services. Air-India is also taking steps to improve its image/services. New destinations have been adden in the recent past. Airports Authority of India is planning to spend Rs. 3490 crores during the 9th plan period for upgrading various airports.

(e) and (f) No, Sir. Air-India and Indian Airlines utilise 44.6% of the entitlements. Shortage of aircraft capacity, trained personnel and industrial relation problem are the main impediments faced by the national carriers.

Electronic Exchange at Uluberia

930. SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to set up a new large Electronic Exchange at Uluberia;

(b) if so, the present status of the work;

(c) the target fixed for the project;

(d) the areas in which the Government have received proposals to set up new Exchanges in the Uluberia Sub-Division of the Howrah district of West Bengal; and

(e) the time by which these exchanges are likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) A 1000 lines Remote Subscriber Unit (RSU) parented to Salkia Main OCB Exchange is planned to be set up at Uluberia. The exchange equipment and infrastructure are available Connecting microwave equipment is partially available, three phase electric supply from State Electricity Board is yet to be provided.

(c) March, 1997.

(d) Proposals are received to set up new Telephone Exchanges at Bauria, Bakshirhat, Kalyanpur, Shyampur and Udayanarayanpur in Uluberia Sub-division.

(e)(1) The new exchange at Bauria is likely to be set up in 1997-98.

(2) The new exchange at Bakshirhat is likely to be set up by 31.03.97.

(3) For Kalyanpur, the plan is yet to be finalised.

(4) At Shyampur, one C-Dot 128 port exchange has been installed already.

(5) At Udayanarayanpur one C-DOT 256 port exchange has been installed already.

[Translation]

Container Service

931. SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of cities in the country where the container service has been provided;

(b) whether the Government propose to provide this service in Jaipur; and

(c) if so, the time by which the said services are likely to be introduced in Jaipur?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Container service has been provided by Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR), a Public Sector Unit under Ministry of Railways in twenty three cities of the country.

(b) and (c) An Inland Container Depot (ICD) is already being operated by Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation (RAJSICO) at Sanganer in Jaipur.

[English]

Losses in SAIL

932. SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV :
PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the SAIL incurred huge losses in giving unsecured credit and supplying materials to certain private parties without any letter of credit;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) to (c) No, Sir. According to SAIL, it grants unsecured credit as an accepted commercial practice based on certain parameters. Wherever there are delays, SAIL recovers the amount alongwith the applicable interest and, as such, SAIL is not incurring huge losses in such transactions.

INTERNET Current Account

933. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that foreign business travellers visiting India for a short duration find it difficult to open a temporary INTERNET current account from VSNL;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to simplify the procedure to open INTERNET current account;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the monopoly of VSNL and its poor service is hurting the foreign investment; and

(f) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) No, Sir. The existing procedure for opening INTERNET account is simple.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) No, Sir. The INTERNET service is available through VSNL in 6 cities and DoT in 10 cities. The quality of INTERNET service in India compares well with international INTERNET service providers.

(f) Question does not arise in view of reply at (e) above.

Construction of Bridge at Palliady

934. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by the Government to ful-fill the long standing demand of the people to put up a bridge at Palliady near the level crossing and railway station along the existing footpath or 'Man' the level crossing in the Trivendrum-Kanniyakumari railway line; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Level crossing is not feasible at this site and no proposal for a Road Over Bridge has been sponsored by the State Government.

(b) Does not arise.

Introduction of Train between New Delhi and Moradabad

935. SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received a suggestion from Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts